

REMARKS

In the final Office Action¹, the Examiner rejected claims 2, 3, 9, 11, 23, 25-27, 29, 30, 32, 33, and 36 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,185,535 to Hedin et al. ("*Hedin*") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,999,940 to Ranger ("*Ranger*"); rejected claims 6 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Hedin* in view of *Ranger* and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,493,671 to Ladd et al. ("*Ladd*"); and rejected claims 24, 28, 31, and 34 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Hedin* in view of *Ranger* and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,263,313 to Milsted et al. ("*Milsted*"). The Examiner also objected to claim 35 as dependent from a rejected base claim, but indicated that claim 35 contained allowable subject matter.

By this Amendment, Applicants amend independent claims 23 and 25-27, and cancel claim 35. Upon entry of this amendment, claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 23-34, and 36 will be pending and under current examination.

Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of claims 2, 3, 9, 11, 23, 25-27, 29, 30, 32, 33, and 36, the rejection of claims 6 and 7, and the rejection of claims 24, 28, 31, and 34. Amended independent claims 23, 25, 26, and 27 incorporate subject matter from canceled dependent claim 35. The Examiner did not reject claim 35 in the Office Action, indicating the claim contains allowable subject matter (Final Office Action at p. 13).

¹ The Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statement is identified herein, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

Applicant submits that the amendment places claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 24, 29-31, and 36 in condition for allowance at least due to their dependence from claim 23, places claim 9 in condition for allowance at least due to its dependence from claim 25, places claims 11 and 32-34 in condition for allowance at least due to their dependence from claim 26, and places claim 28 in condition for allowance at least due to its dependence from claim 27.

Applicants respectfully request that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 23-34, and 36 in condition for allowance. Applicants submit that the proposed amendments of claims 23 and 25-27 do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, because all of the elements and their relationships claimed were either earlier claimed or inherent in the claims as examined. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application and withdrawal of the rejections. Pending claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 23-34, and 36 are in condition for allowance.

PATENT

Application Number: 09/674,576


Attorney Docket Number: 09812.0602

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW,
GARRETT & DUNNER, L.L.P.

Dated: October 30, 2006

By: 
Michael R. Kelly
Reg. No. 33,921